



EDITORIAL:

Ecocriticism and Pandemics

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As the Covid-19 pandemic has disrupted the 21st century by totally changing people's lives, it has also become one of the factors that is bringing forward new ways of thinking about the environment. Ecocriticism has therefore become a new trend in cross-disciplinary research, necessitated by the state of emergency due to the pandemic. In *The Ecocriticism Reader*, Cheryll Glotfelty notes that "Ecocriticism is the study of the relationship between literature and the physical environment", in other words, it is a combination of literature and the natural environment as an implicit criticism between human/non-human. This was one of the topics that were dealt with by participants in our recent conference, *INTERFACEmg 2021*, a fact that motivated the journal's editorial board to set "Ecocriticism and Pandemics" as the Special Topic for the current issue. We have received a considerable amount of submissions, both from people who participated in the conference and from others who were attracted by our Call for Papers. After anonymous peer review we selected for publication four of the submitted papers, two of which had been presented in *INTERFACEmg*. We are very happy not only with the considerable quality of these papers, but also with their spread (geographic, temporal, disciplinary, linguistic) which illustrate the identity of *INTERFACE* as an international, multilingual, multi/inter-disciplinary journal.

Our selection starts with Augé's study, which explores the controversial reference of Covid-19 as a remedy to environmental problems ("Natural is healing. We are the virus.") and seeks to explore to what extent environmentalists rely on it to deliver their perspectives and messages, to support their lines of argumentation. Against the background of an

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ongoing Covid-19 pandemic and worsening environmental degradation, the article analyzes the linkages between these two major issues which provides a relevant field of study from a linguistic perspective.

Environmental degradation is also an issue of importance in Stepanov's analysis of Marie Redonnet's *Splendid Hôtel*, the story of a crumbling inn and its nameless, obsessive innkeeper. Stepanov, based on the theory of "becoming" of Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, focuses on Redonnet's deployment of "ecology" and "economy", relates them to their Greek root, *oikos*, and very perceptively analyzes how Redonnet creates paradoxical relationships between economy and ecology and space and body, most notably the narrator's. We can find in the conclusion what it means to become our environment, what (fear of) contagion does to body and mind, what a non-genealogical, "ecological" filiation might look like, and what insight *Splendid Hôtel* can offer on our current era's condition.

Guerio's paper "Malattie scambiate: Peste e Colera in Percy e Mary Shelley", resonates with responses to Covid -19, the post-colonial attitude in the distribution of vaccines and the way WHO has described for us all the uneven map of health. It tackles a subject that is both pertinent and original through a novel reading of the two works concerned, *The Revolt of Islam* and *The Last Man*. The two opening sections of the article provide an impressively detailed account of the history and epidemiology of cholera with extensive citation of statistics and studies.

Mitsios brings our collection to a close with his compelling study "Ancient Pandemics in Mythical Athens: the Leokorai and the Hyakinthids". He discusses the myths concerning the Leokorai and the Hyakinthids, and he very persuasively shows not only how these myths functioned within ancient Athenian society in times of plagues and famines, but also the interplay between myths and contexts and the ideology of the times and the place.

The appearance of the Covid-19 pandemic has brought renewed interest to plagues of the past and the way people in the past reacted and

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talked about them. This special issue can be regarded as scholars' inquiries about ecology in the post-epidemic era. By examining myths, poems, and literature environmentally, the authors make a distinctive contribution to in-depth speculation on human/nonhuman. Likewise, the main attempt is to deepen and broaden research and to connect "ecocriticism" worldwide. Since environmental disasters and pandemics are largely man-made, not to mention the ruination brought on by autocrats' wars against humanity, the ultimate goal of ecocriticism may well be to decentralize humans, to attend to what is suppressed and silenced in the Anthropocene epoch.